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Grant Swinger Sees Hope in Energy Crisis

Following is an interview with Dr. Grant Swinger, director of the Center for the Absorption of Federal Funds.

Q. Dr. Swinger, as an observer of government affairs, please explain what the Administration is doing about the energy crisis.

A. Well, as you may recall, in April the President established at the White House level a Special Energy Committee and a National Energy Office.

Q. But there have been some changes since then, haven't there?

A. Yes. The President has since disbanded the Special Energy Committee, after one of its three members, Mr. Haldeman, became otherwise occupied, and he has subsumed the National Energy Office in a newly established White House Energy Policy Office, which, like its immediate predecessor, takes on the energy function of the Office of Science and Technology, which was abolished.

Q. Why did he abolish the Office of Science and Technology?

A. Because, as he explained, the expertise that it provided had become sufficiently available throughout the government's departments and agencies to render it unnecessary at the White House level.

Q. Then why did he establish the National Energy Office and then the Energy Policy Office?

A. To provide the White House with the energy expertise that was formerly the responsibility of the Office of Science and Technology.

Q. I see . . .

A. This also enabled the President to bring in Governor Love of Colorado as Director of the Energy Policy Office and Assistant to the President. Knowing nothing about energy or Washington and being virtually unknown there, he can provide a fresh look.

Q. But what about Mr. DiBona, who headed the National Energy Office?

A. He benefited from a background similar to Governor Love's, its true. In any case, he remains as the President's Special Consultant on Energy, and is an adviser to the Special Assistant, Governor Love.

Q. What else is happening?

A. The National Science Foundation has established an Office of Energy Policy which will advise the Foundation's Director in his capacity as Science Advisor to the White House.

Q. But hasn't the Director also established a Science and Technology Policy Office to advise him in his role as Advisor?

A. Certainly, but you wouldn't want him to be dependent on simply one source of advise, would you? Needless to say, he is also drawing advice from the Foundation's program of Research Applied to National Needs, which, in turn, benefits from advice provided by the National Academy of Sciences in its statutory role as science adviser to the federal government.

Q. Hmm. Does the Science Advisor advise the President on energy matters or does he advise the President's Special Assistant for energy?

A. No. He advises the Secretary of the Treasury, who is the President's adviser on domestic economic affairs. I would point out too, that he also advises the Office of Management and Budget associate director for energy and natural resources.

Q. Then, energy policy is being formulated through NSF's Office of Energy Policy in conjunction with the White House and the Office of Management and Budget?

A. Not exactly. You see, the White House has

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In Brief

James T. Ramey, who back in 1962 went from the directorship of the congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy to membership on the Atomic Energy Commission, has returned to the JCAE as a consultant, following expiration of his AEC term. Though identified as a Democrat and the JCAE's own "man on the Commission," Ramey's departure from the AEC drew an unusually warm goodbye letter from President Nixon.

Henry Kissinger's appointment as Secretary of State reopens the question of the future of the Department's Office of International Scientific and Technological Affairs. Under Herman Pollack, a non-scientist career officer, the Office has thrived as never before, but many State officials still regard it as an odd-ball outfit remote from the Department's major functions and policy-making operations. Kissinger, unlike his predecessors, has shown more than a passing interest in science and technology, and even had his own little scientific "brain trust" while serving at the White House.

Available only for some 900 upper-echelon Defense Department officials; *The Friday Review of Defense Literature,* **a weekly abstract of books and articles dealing with national security matters. Prepared by a staff within the office of the Secretary of the Air Force "for key DoD personnel," it's an unusually useful guide to the subject matter as well as to what DoD deems worthy of note. If you've got a friend at DoD, perhaps he can get it for you. Telephone of the** *Review,* **OX 5-2985.**

RANN Program Still Booming Despite Fund Cut

How fares the budget of NSF's program of Research Applied to National Needs (RANN), the booming newcomer which, riding the crest of "relevance," came from no place a few years ago to take up some 10 percent of spending by the traditionally basic-science oriented Foundation?

RANN is still in there for a big chunk of NSF's money, but following quiet prodding by some of the elders of basic research, Congress has trimmed the Foundation's designs for the program; meanwhile, the Office of Management and Budget, which has supported RANN as an interesting experiment in developing quick "payoff" from research, says the time is drawing close—perhaps another year or two—for a coldblooded appraisal of the program's efficacy.

For the fiscal year now underway, NSF asked Congress for $79.2 million for RANN. A House-Senate conference—which is almost certain to be supported by both chambers—cut the sum to $72 million. In doing so, it specified that RANN is to expend $25 million of this sum on energy research and technology, rather than the $20.7 million originally planned, and $8 million on earthquake engineering, which is $1 million more than the original figure for that purpose.

With the total reduced, and the energy and earthquake components earmarked for increases, an NSF official said, the effect will be "severe pressure" on longrange policy studies that don't manifest themselves in readily visible gadgetry and systems.

The program, according to persons close to it, has also taken on a tendency to be "overmanaged"—largely as a result of numerous onlookers being ready to pounce at the first hint of a blunder.

"We're not getting good social science here," one official said. "The superstars aren't coming to us. Why should they, when they can get support with far fewer strings attached? We demand all kinds of detailed research designs and management plans, and they don't have to put up with this. They can go elsewhere, even to other parts of NSF, and get support on simpler terms."

Perhaps the biggest change in RANN's operations over the past year is a slight but decisive shift away from the Foundation's traditional reliance on academic researchers. "We've moved to a 'best-performer' concept," it was reported, "and we find that industry is willing and able to do lots of the things we're interested in."

Over at OMB, the view is that it's still a bit early to tell, since RANN is less than three years old. "But the time is getting close for a hard look at what they've achieved," an OMB official said.

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asked the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission to prepare a plan for an expanded energy research program. As you may recall, in April, the President rejected Senator Jackson's plan to spend $20 billion on energy research over 10 years and instead came out in favor of spending $10 billion over five years.

Q. I see. But . . .

A. The President, however, did say he would make an extra $100 million available immediately.

Q. What is being done with that money?

A. There has been some difficulty with that matter since the President never asked Congress for the extra $100 million, but fortunately, the matter is under study, and will be the subject of a number of conferences, symposia, workshops, and perhaps a summer institute or two.

Q. When energy research is expanded, who will be in charge of it?

A. You may recall that the President has asked Congress to establish a Department of Energy and Natural Resources.

Q. Will that Department handle the funds?

A. No, the funds will be handled by the Energy Research and Development Administration, which the President also proposes to create.

Q. To whom will the Energy Research and Development Administration report?

A. Probably to the Energy Policy Office, though some coordinating function may be involved with the energy subcommittee of the Federal Council for Science and Technology, which is chaired by Dr. Stever. I would point out, too, that Dr. Stever is also chairman of the advisory committee that serves under the President's Special Assistant for Energy, Governor Love. Dr. Stever, in a sense, is the adviser for Governor Love, who advises the President in consultation with the President's Special Consultant, Mr. DiBona.

Q. Are you pleased with these developments?

A. Yes. From the perspective of the Center for the Absorption of Federal Funds, they are extremely welcome and just in time, since customers are rare these days for the old mainstays, such as arms control, space cooperation, population studies, science policy, ecology, and the information explosion. That last one, incidentally, turned out to be a real turkey. Oceanography has faded, despite attempts to revive it as oceanology and then as marine resources. There's some mileage still in technology assessment, but the market's thinning. So, we're delighted that energy has arrived, since it looks like it's got real durability.

Q. I see.

A. We're getting a piece of the action, so to speak, but as a hedge, we're under contract to Ralph Nader.

Q. For what?

A. To design a Tomb of the Unknown Consumer.

Q. Thank you, Dr. Swinger.—DSG

CBW Study Calls for Scientist Vigilantes

Vigilante groups of concerned scientists are needed to guard against the development of chemical and biological weapons, according to a study recently issued by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), an independent foundation that is financed by the Swedish government but governed by an international board, headed by economist Gunnar Myrdal.

This study, entitled *CB Weapons Today*, is Volume II of a six-volume SIPRI study on *The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare*. Three of the other volumes were published in 1971, while the remaining two will be published later this year.

This latest volume warns that an arms-control treaty would not be sufficient to prevent CBW because scientific advances in such seemingly peaceful areas as pest control, public health, and pollution control could provide the knowledge from which to develop advanced CB weapons.

The study notes that "all the leading" chemical warfare agents "were first encountered during nonmilitary research: mustard gas was discovered in an academic laboratory and the nerve gases in industrial ones." It suggests that pesticides research, which led to some of the nerve gases, "is likely to continue providing impetus to CB weapon programmes" because the manufacturing techniques, application methods, hardware, meteorological behavior, and mode of action of pesticides is often similar to chemical warfare agents. It also concludes that "given the existing state of knowledge, novel lethal agents seem more likely to appear by accident than by design."

The study notes that the Pugwash organization and other groups have proposed "informal verification activities by nongovernmental organizations, particularly scientific bodies," which would seek to "identify, isolate and stigmatise CB weapon researchers, and to ensure the publicity that might lead to formal controls on new discoveries having CB weapon applications."

"What is being suggested here is, of course, *vigilante* activity by groups of concerned scientists," the study acknowledges. "As such, the proposals are open to all the criticism that attaches to minority group watch committees. But it may be argued that the risks of CB weapons for mankind—the terrible extent to which they could magnify the consequences of irresponsible behavior—is reason enough for this sort of action. And in CBW, where the frontiers of knowledge are perhaps closer to the battlefield than in any other area of military technology, scientists occupy a peculiarly influential position."

The volume was written primarily by Julian Perry Robinson, though it is described as a "team" effort with contributions from numerous individuals. It is primarily based on widely scattered published sources, though it also contains unpublished information supplied by CBW experts in many countries.

The volume describes present-day CB weapons, how they differ in operation and military effects from other weapons, how they might be used, and what value they might have to different types of country. It also reviews national CBW policies and programs and analyzes the future status of CBW. The study can be ordered in the US from Humanities Press, Inc., 450 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016. 420 pp. About $16.50.

NAS Sets Up Studies On Safety, Labor R&D

The National Academy of Sciences has quietly initiated two major studies on subjects with far-reaching implications for public policy.

The first, administered by the Academy's Assembly of Behavioral and Social Sciences, is taking a two-year look at the results achieved from the $180 million that the Department of Labor has spent over the past decade on R&D in support of its $20-$25 billion expenditures on manpower training programs. In doing so, it is venturing into unexplored territory, for Labor's R&D program, though one of the largest social science efforts in the federal repertory, has so far managed to elude any significant outside examination. The Academy study is backed by a $298,000 Labor Department contract and is presided over by a 13-member committee chaired by Gordon Swanson, coordinator of international education at the University of Minnesota. Three fulltime professional staff members are carrying out the day-to-day work of the study.

The second Academy study, under the auspices of NAS's Committee on Science and Public Policy, is titled, "Science in the Determination of Safety," and, according to its prospectus, aims to determine "What 'safe' means in various contexts, how degree of safety is determined, and how the government works with scientists to assure the safety of things to the public . . ."

The prospectus adds, "It will be made clear that nothing is absolutely safe, that there are simply degrees of safety, and a statement about safety is merely an estimate of probability, a measure of expectation . . ."

The advisory panel for the study is chaired by Herbert S. Gutowsky, chairman of the department of chemistry and chemical engineering, University of Illinois; the vice chairman of the study is George B. Kistiakowsky, who recently retired as vice president of the Academy. Other members are in the process of being chosen, and about $30,000 is being sought from foundations to finance the study.

Cancer Plan Revisions Fail to Satisfy Critics

The Nixon Administration finally released its "strategic plan" for cancer research last month but there were few cheers over the specifics of the long-delayed document. Advocates of an all-out attack on the cancer problem were disappointed at the funding levels recommended in the plan (see related story, page 5). And biomedical scientists remained fearful that the plan foreshadows a centralized management system under which Washington bureaucrats will dictate the pace and direction of research with little regard for recommendations from the scientific community.

The plan was required by the National Cancer Act of 1971, which committed the government to a major research effort aimed at conquering cancer. The document was prepared by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) after extensive consultation with the scientific community. Some 250 scientists participated in 40 planning sessions, ultimately producing more than 3,000 pages of panel reports listing research recommendations. The NCI staff drew on this material to produce a "strategic plan" and a one-volume digest of the scientific recommendations, and these documents were then circulated to the 250 planning participants and to various professional and governmental bodies concerned with cancer research. The extent of outside consultation, according to NCI, constitutes "a unique event in the history of biology and medicine in this country."

However, some of those consulted on the plan are not pleased with the way it turned out. The most extensive criticism has come from a committee of the Institute of Medicine (IoM) of the National Academy of Sciences, headed by Lewis Thomas, former Yale medical dean who recently became president of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. The IoM group was the only one asked to conduct an "in-depth" review of the plan, so its comments should be accorded considerable weight.

After the IoM group reviewed a preliminary draft of the plan late last year, it submitted a critique to NCI in December. The thrust of that critique was that the plan imposed "too great a risk of bureaucratic rigidity" because it emphasized centralized planning by systems analysts at NCI and offered little encouragement for the development of new ideas by individual scientists and independent groups.

"What is most urgently needed for problems of this kind is an abundance of new ideas, and these are most likely to emerge from the imagination and intuition of individual scientists," the committee said. Yet the cancer plan "leaves the impression that all shots can be called from a central headquarters, that all, or nearly all, of the really important ideas are already in hand, and that given the right kind of administration and organization, the hard problems can be solved. It fails to allow for the surprises which must surely lie ahead if we are really going to gain an understanding of cancer."

The NCI responded to this criticism by revising the plan somewhat. But the IoM was not satisfied. Committee chairman Thomas acknowledged in an April 6 letter that "certain changes have been made in the text of the Plan which obviate some of the criticisms contained in our committee's review." But he added that "there remain a number of substantial issues on which there is disagreement." Similarly, Laurence Tancredi, senior staff officer for the IoM group, told SGR that NCI had "just changed some of the language"—particularly the systems jargon that had alarmed the IoM group—but had "really not made any significant changes" in the plan.

The IoM group has deliberately avoided naming specific defects in the revised plan lest the effort degenerate into a name-calling match between accuser and accused. But a perusal of the revised version indicates that many of the IoM's major criticisms remain unanswered. Thus the IoM had urged that the plan contain a list of basic science areas deemed essential for the success of the cancer program and that NCI support work in these areas regardless of whether the scientists involved considered themselves cancer investigators. The IoM has also warned that the plan might exacerbate financial instability in the medical schools by inducing them to expand staff and equipment without assurances of long-term support and by requiring them to put up matching funds for construction. And the IoM had complained that there was inadequate provision for training researchers in the crucial disciplines. None of these issues was discussed in the revised plan.

Moreover, in those cases where the plan was revised—as in passages that assert the importance of spontaneously generated projects by independent

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NSF Issues R&D Figures

A slew of statistics chronicling the recent ups and downs of academic finance and enrollments, with particular emphasis on R&D affairs, has recently emerged from the National Science Foundation's Division of Science Resources Studies. The reliability of the numbers and the validity of the accompanying interpretations invite some questions, but for anyone concerned with the numerology of academe, the figures are probably the best available, and attention is therefore directed to the following reports, four pages each, obtainable without charge from: NSF, 1800 G St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20550—

NSF 73-307 "Federal Support to Universities and Colleges Rises to $4.1 Billion in FY 1972";

NSF 73-308 "Academic R&D Expenditures Reached $3.3 Billion in 1972," and

NSF 73-310 "Graduate Science Enrollment Declines 2 Percent from 1971 to 1972."

OMB Reduces Recommended Spending on Cancer

The "strategic plan" for the national cancer program bears a date of January 1973 but it was not released by the White House until August 17. Some of the delay can be attributed to the fact it takes considerable time for any document to wend its way through the federal bureaucracy. But the main reason is that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) balked at the spending levels desired by cancer administrators.

Both Frank J. Rauscher, director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), and the National Cancer Advisory Board, a group of distinguished scientists who report annually on the progress of the cancer program, recommended that NCI be granted a $640-million budget in fiscal 1974, the full amount that had been authorized by Congress.

This amount was also endorsed, albeit tepidly, by Robert Q. Marston, former head of NIH. In an internal memorandum last October, Marston stated that the activities proposed under the $640-million budget were "likely to contribute to an all-out fight against cancer." He therefore supported the cancer proposal, although he suggested that NCI should spend more money on basic research and he expressed concern that cancer research might grow "at the expense of other research."

These spending recommendations conflicted with the Nixon Administration's efforts to hold down expenditures. The Administration's proposed budget for fiscal 1974 allotted only $500 million for NCI. And when the strategic plan for cancer research finally emerged last month, it had concluded, to no one's surprise, that $500 million was precisely the amount needed for 1974. "OMB cut the scale of the whole thing down," explains one high-ranking NIH administrator. "OMB and the assistant secretary for health (in HEW) insisted that the plan be brought into line with the 1974 budget, and they scaled it down in future years as well."

The strategic plan, which covers a five-year period and is to be updated annually, recommends that NCI expenditures rise from $500 million in fiscal 1974 to $841.5 million in fiscal 1978. It also projects a target operating level of $1.7 billion a year by fiscal 1982, enough to support about 13,500 scientists, up from 5,500 in fiscal 1972. It acknowledges that lack of manpower may prove a constraint on the program.

The plan sets forth seven major objectives—ranging from methods to reduce the effectiveness of external agents in causing cancer to methods to improve the rehabilitation of cancer patients—and it outlines numerous scientific approaches for reaching these objectives. At one point, it suggests that new organizational patterns will be needed, including university-industry combinations, integrated networks of cancer centers, an expanded role for industry, and more contractor-operated, government-owned facilities, such as the Frederick Cancer Research Center at Fort Detrick, Md.

The spending levels proposed in the plan are apt to remain a source of controversy. The Nixon Administration has not committed itself to the amounts recommended for future years. But some Congressional leaders are critical of the Administration's failure to push for the full amounts authorized by Congress. Senator Mike Mansfield, (D-Mont.), the Senate majority leader, and Senator Warren Magnuson (D-Wash.), chairman of the Senate appropriations subcommittee that handles cancer funds, have charged that the cancer crusade is "more myth than reality."

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scientists—the IoM remains skeptical whether NCI is sincere or is simply paying lip service to the concerns of the scientific community. This skepticism is shared by one of the highest ranking research administrators at NIH, who told SGR "I don't think NCI really made any significant changes" when it revised the plan. The administrator said IoM was "to some extent justified" in its fear that the cancer program would overemphasize highly directed research and downgrade basic science.

But such fears are not justified, in the opinion of Louis Carrese, a systems analyst who is NCI's associate director for program planning and analysis. Carrese told SGR that many of the IoM's concerns were caused by "systems jargon" in the plan, "so we went through our report and made as many changes as we could to eliminate planning jargon." Carrese acknowledged that many policy issues raised by the IoM—such as the proper balance between centralized and decentralized decision-making, contracts and grants, and large and small research institutes—were not addressed by the strategic plan, but he said this was because the plan concerned itself more with scientific goals than with mechanisms for reaching those goals. As for fears that Washington bureaucrats would dictate the course of research, he said "this is not what we intended to convey. People are trying to read between the lines. They're trying to make more out of this (the strategic plan) than is there. We couldn't be dictatorial about this if we wanted to. We'd need 25,000 scientists in Washington to look over the shoulders of the rest of the scientists."

Both the IoM and NCI agree that the extent to which they differ or agree will become clearer after NCI issues a detailed operational plan setting forth management procedures and specifying the research programs that will be implemented. That plan, due to be completed after the 1st of next year, will be given only limited circulation, but IoM officials hope they will get a chance to review it to see whether their concerns are legitimate.—PMB

Big Spenders Draw Fire in GAO Grant Study

The thrift-minded investigators of Congress's General Accounting Office (GAO) have made another foray into the laboratories of NIH's grantees, and have found that some of the frontiersmen of knowledge care little about what's available next door when they expend government funds for costly scientific equipment.

At one unnamed institution, they report, "a new ultracentrifuge was purchased, even though an identical unit was conveniently located nearby." Questioned about the matter, "The researcher purchasing the new unit said he was not interested in identical equipment in other departments." As if to emphasize his disdain for economizing, "Ten months later this same researcher purchased another $10,000 ultracentrifuge with NIH grant funds, even though two units were available and receiving combined use of only 12 to 14 hours per week."

Strange goings on, it may seem, but *cognoscente* of the research scene will be able to deduce what was really going from the windup to this episode, as reported by GAO: "This second ultracentrifuge, purchased . . . for planned expansion and as a spare unit, was never used and was eventually transferred with the researcher to another grantee institution."

What the GAO fails to recognize is that foresight rather than wastefulness was at work here, for in today's tight job market, a well-equipped applicant is likely to fare better than a bare-handed competitor.

The report, titled, *Better Management Needed of Health Research Equipment by NIH Grantees* (B-164031 [2] ; $1, GAO, 441 G St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20548), relates other tales of researchers who regarded other people's readily available equipment as they might regard other people's toothbrushes.

For example, there was the institution that in 1971 "purchased three ultramicrotomes at an average cost of $5,300. We identified at least 30 ultramicrotomes on hand at the end of 1971, 10 of which had low use, including two which were used one hour per week or less and another which had not been used in almost 5 years. The highest use for any of the remaining six ultramicrotomes was about 12 hours per week."

Finally, there was the researcher who "acquired a new spectrophotometer costing about $5,000 for use on his project. At the time of the acquisition," the GAO reports, "the institution owned a comparable unit which had not been used in three years." The researcher explained that he didn't know the desired equipment was on hand, which, according to GAO, explains a good deal of the problem, for as anyone familiar with academic record keeping knows, it does not tend to be illuminating, nor is NIH's own system of much help.

The GAO reports that the most up-to-date figures for grantee purchases of equipment with NIH funds date back to 1965, when $60 million was expended for this purpose. Moreover, out there among the clients, GAO found on the basis of visits to six institutions, record keeping was chaotic. "Equipment terminology was not uniform. One institution, for example, classified the same type of equipment as spectrometers, detector scintillation, system scintillation, and counter scintillation. . . . At one institution it would be necessary to canvass as many as 277 pages of the inventory records listing about 6700 items to ascertain availability."

In the characteristically emotion-free prose of its reports, GAO recommended that "NIH be directed to instruct grantees to improve their records so that grantee officials can screen all major items of equipment before new equipment is purchased."

GAO reports that "NIH officials agreed generally with our recommendation."

SGR prognosis: Nothing will happen.

Science Chiefs Plan Reunion

The leaders in exile of the scientific community —all former directors of the now-defunct White House science office—are expected to be on hand Oct. 4-5 at MIT for the dedication of the $17.5 million Sherman Fairchild Building and a symposium on "High Technology for a Livable World."

The principal speaker will be their partial successor, NSF Director H. Guyford Stever, whom the President has designated to take over some of the responsibilities formerly assigned to the old White House post. Stever's speech, which is now being pasted up by his staff, will insist that science has not been downgraded by the Nixon administration and that the principal task ahead is to maximize the benefits of technology while minimizing undesirable side effects.

The new building, named after the late founder and chairman of the Fairchild Camera and Instrument Co., was financed with a $4-million grant from the Fairchild Foundation, an assortment of private and corporate gifts, and $1.8 million from the US Office of Education and NIH. The largest building completed at MIT since 1916, it will house the Department of Electrical Engineering and the Research Laboratory of Electronics.

The former science advisers who will attend are three who served under Eisenhower: James R. Killian Jr., honorary chairman of the MIT Corporation; Lee A. DuBridge, retired Caltech president, who returned to the post for the first year of Nixon's presidency, and George B. Kistiakowsky, professor emeritus of chemistry, Harvard.

Also, MIT President Jerome B. Wiesner, who held the job under Kennedy; Brown University President Donald F. Hornig, who served throughout the Johnson presidency, and Edward E. David Jr., who, under Nixon, was the last occupant of the office, and has since become director and executive vice president of Gould, Inc.

NIH Study Sections Survive Committee Bloodbath

Those outraged screams from the scientific community protesting a possible dismantling of the peer-review system at NIH appear to have had an effect. The NIH "study sections"—those committees of 12 to 15 scientists, mainly from the universities, who evaluate the scientific merit of research proposals—have emerged almost unscathed from the Nixon Administration's recent committee-cutting exercise.

The Administration, spurred in part by pressure from Congress, has been diligently trying to cut down the proliferating network of advisory committees that serve all levels of the federal bureaucracy. The rationale is that many of the committees serve no useful purpose while others usurp decision-making powers and allow special interests to influence government policy.

Virtually everyone would agree that useless or destructive committees should be abolished. But the scientific community became alarmed when a document prepared by OMB suggested that the peer-review system, long regarded as a key to assuring the quality of research supported by NIH, was guilty of many of the sins attributed to other advisory mechanisms. (SGR, Vol. III, No. 10)

The OMB document even suggested a number of "alternatives for improving the peer-review system," ranging from complete abolition of the peer-review mechanism to replacement of the review committees by a system of readers who would review grant proposals by mail rather than in face-to-face committee debate.

These proposals provoked strong objections from, among others, the NIH leadership, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, numerous individual scientists, and Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), chairman of the Senate health subcommittee and long-time champion of the academic science crowd. The volume of complaints led Charles C. Edwards, HEW assistant secretary for health, to issue several soothing statements that peer-review would not be abolished entirely—rather the number of review committees would probably be reduced.

But as it turned out, very few of the study sections were affected at all. HEW Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger recently announced that since February he had eliminated 119 of the department's 392 advisory committees, including 57 at NIH. The vast majority of the NIH casualties were committees that reviewed applications for training grants. Since the Nixon Administration has drastically reduced training grant awards, these committees would have little to do anyway.

Only two of the NIH casualties were "study sections" that review research proposals. One was the History of Life Sciences Study Section, a committee which would undoubtedly be judged the most dispensable study section by all but a handful of historians among NIH grantees. The other was the Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases Program-Project Committee, which has had a light workload in recent times. In addition, two other committees which reviewed both research and training applications relating to aspects of child health have been merged into a single Maternal and Child Health Committee.

What's more, Weinberger went out of his way to praise the peer-review groups, asserting that while many of the department's other advisory committees accomplish little, "some of the committees provide valuable technical assistance and expertise to the department, particularly in the area of grant review."

What saved the study sections from the advisory committee bloodbath? Robert W. Berliner, NIH deputy director for science, believes it was "largely because the academic community and NIH made a lot of noise," thus making it clear to the Administration that peer-review served a valuable purpose. And Edward W. Hanley III, HEW's committee management officer, explained: "No one has come up with a better system."

In Print

Recent publications of more than routine interest:

Immigrant Scientists and Engineers in the United States, A Study of Characteristics and Attitudes. "Standard of living," "curiosity about the US," and "research opportunities," in that order, ranked highest among the motivations of foreign scientists and engineers taking up residence in the US, according to this latest NSF survey of the brain drain. Ninety percent reported earnings of more than $10,000 and 9 percent of more than $20,000 a year. About half said their current salary was "at least 200 percent greater than abroad." Numbering 101 pages of statistics and analysis, the report, NSF 73-302, is available for $1.25 from the US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

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DoD's Foster Rumored In Line for Energy Post

John S. Foster Jr., the record-setting holdover from the Johnson administration, stepped down June 28 after nearly eight years as chief of Defense Research and Engineering, but though forgotten is far from gone from the Washington scene.

Foster signed on immediately as a consultant to his successor, Malcolm R. Currie, but supposedly well-informed word is that he is merely in a holding pattern, pending appointment to another Administration post. An often-mentioned possibility is directorship of the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) that Nixon proposes to build around the AEC's technical facilities as part of a general reorganization of the government's natural resources and energy activities (SGR Vol. III, No. 9). Another possibility for that post is AEC Chairman Dixy Lee Ray, but she's no favorite of Rep. Chet Holifield (D-Calif.), who chairs the committee that must approve the reorganization.

Holifield, an unswerving advocate of nuclear power, blames Ms. Ray for the departure of his nuclear soulmate, Milton Shaw, from the directorship of the AEC's division of reactor development and technology, and it's said that he's not disposed to see her take over the proposed ERDA. Foster is on good terms with the chairman, and has a demonstrated immunity to Nixon's urge to root out all holdovers from Democratic days.

The arms control community in Washington has nothing but contempt for Foster's shrewdly contrived assessments of the Soviet arms menace. But as far as the Administration is concerned, Foster was a team player throughout his long tenure at Defense, and when it comes to dealing with Congress, if he can juggle the energy numbers as easily as he juggled the missile numbers, he'll be a valuable man to have in the increasingly political field of energy.

Sinatra Shows No Heart for NIH Advisory Work

Crooner Frank Sinatra is undoubtedly the best known member of the National Heart and Lung Council but his own heart is apparently not in committee work.

Although Sinatra's name adorned a recent report from the Council which proposed a five-year $2.6-billion program of heart-lung research, the singer actually made no contribution whatever to the preparation of the report. Nor did he attend either of the two meetings of the Council which were held subsequent to his appointment in December, Theodore Cooper, director of the National Heart and Lung Institute, told SGR.

Sinatra's absentee record warranted expose treatment in the August 26 issue of the *National Enquirer*, a racy tabloid that once specialized in monsters and murders but has recently been cultivating a more serious image. As the *Enquirer* described the situation, "Sinatra has absolutely no qualifications for the job, say medical experts, and he's never even bothered to report for work."

That may be overstating the case, since there are no particular qualifications for the job Sinatra has failed to perform. The Council consists not only of medical experts but also of lay people (like Sinatra) who are supposed to bring a citizen's perspective to the Council's work.

According to the *Enquirer* article, Sinatra, a staunch Nixon supporter and crony of Vice President Agnew, asked to be appointed to the Council last October. He was endorsed for the post by no less a figure than Michael Debakey, the famed Houston heart surgeon, who noted that Sinatra had been interested in heart disease ever since his father died of it and that Sinatra had financed a wing on a California hospital in honor of his father.

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